THE JUSTICE OF GOD

by
Sayyyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi

Fourth Revised Edition 1992

ISBN 9976-956-64-9

Published by:
Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania
P.O Box 20033
Dar es Salam, Tanzania

Preface

Preface

to the Revised Edition

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful

The first edition of this book was published in 1970 as the third unit of the Islamic Correspondence Course (ICC), initiated and run by the Bilal Muslim Mission of Tanzania. The aim was to provide in simple language the answers to many questions which are frequently asked not only by the youths but also by the grown-ups.

Since then it has been reprinted several times in Tanzania and Kenya. Also its Swahili translation, *Udilify Wa Mungu,* by Sayyid Muhammad Ridha Shustary, was published in 1985 at Dar es salaam.

As the original work was meant to serve as a text book, it was not necessary to give references for the topics described therein. But the book did not remain confined to the students of the ICC; and requests for its copies have been coming from far and wide. Therefore, with a view to enhance its usefulness, my son, Hujjatul Islam Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi (Vancouver, Canada) had, in 1985, written foot-notes giving most of the necessary references. Some more references have been added by me. Also some revisions and additions have been made by me here and there. Unfortunately, it has taken a much longer time to get this revised and annotated version printed.

We are thankful to the Vancouver Islamic Educational Foundation (Canada) for typesetting of the book. May Allah give them its reward in both worlds.

Dar es Salaam Tanzania,
Sayyid Saeed Akhtar Rizvi,
Chief Missionary
15th November, 1990

Introduction

A. DIFFERENCES IN RELIGION

A faith in the beginning is always simple and uncomplicated. As time goes on, people start elaborating those simple beliefs and that is the point when disputes arise and different sects are established. It had happened in all previous religions and Islam was not an exception. Islam in the beginning was a call to believe in the Oneness of God, in the Messengership of Prophet Muhammad and in the Day of Judgement. These basic principles are beyond any dispute. Also, there is no shadow of doubt that the religion of God is Islam, that the only way to know Islam is through the Book of God and the *sunnah* of the Prophet, and that the Book of God is what is known as the Qur'an without any addition or subtraction.

The differences occur in interpretation of some of the verses of the Qur'an, and the authenticity or otherwise of some ahadith of the Prophet, and in their interpretation and implication. These differences have given rise to many questions which have divided the Muslim world apart. There are many differences about the person of God and His attributes: Does God have a body? Will He be seen? Is God just? Is man compelled by God in his actions or is he free?

As far as the existence, the person and Oneness of God is concerned, it comes under the first root of religion (*usulu 'd-din) known* as *tawhid*, and has been discussed in our previous book '*God of Islam'.*[1] As for the actions of God, they come under the second root of religion known as '*adl*-justice. According to the Shi'ah Ithna-'Ashari faith, '*adl* is one of the most important attributes of God; and that is why it is dealt with separately. The reason why the second root of religion dealing with the actions of God has been named '*adl* is because the differences amongst the Muslims concerning the justice of God are vast and manifold.

Since some of the differences amongst the various Muslim sects are of very fine theological points, it is essential to study the following chapters very carefully. Remember that every term and phrase in these chapters has a significance, and if the reader tries to change any terminology or any phrase, he would put himself in a mess of contradictions and irrelevancies.

A Note on the Meaning of '*adl*:

The word '*adl* was originally coined to convey the idea of making two things equal, and distributing equally. The same is the case with *insaf* which literally means dividing in two halves. The idea of equal distribution naturally leads to equity and justice. And, as a result, '*adl* came to denote justice, equity, to be on straight path, straight :forwardness, to be of exact standard neither less nor more, and to keep everything in its proper place.

The opposite words are jawr and zulm. *Jawr* means to be inclined to one side, which consequently means not to be impartial in justice, to be biased for or against one party. Zulm means to put a thing in a wrong place. As an unjust judge misplaces. his judgement by not giving the aggrieved party its due, he is called zalim.

1 First published in 1969 by Bilal Muslim Mission, and subsequently published more than ten times in Tehran by WOFIS for world wide distribution. Its new edition was published in 1978.

The Muslim Sects Frequently Mentioned in this Book:

The reader will come across the following sects again and again:

Shi ah Ithna- 'Ashari:

Those Muslims who believe in the imamat of twelve Imams beginning with Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib, Imam Hasan, Imam Husayn and his nine descendents. The twelfth Imam is Muhammad al-Mahdi, the awaited saviour.This group is also known as Imamiyyah.

Asha'irah:

All the Sunni Muslims of the present time are Asha'irah in their beliefs. They follow Abu l-Hasan al-Ash'ari (d. 324 A.H./936 C.E.).

Mu'tazilah:

Before Abu 'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari, many Sunnis were Mu'tazilah in their beliefs. They followed the beliefs of Wasil bin 'Ata' (d. 131 A.H. /748 O.E.).However, the Mu'tazilah sect became almost extinct in the fourth *hijrah* century.

B. THE PLACE OF REASON IN RELIGION

The first and most important difference among the Muslims is concerning the role of human reason and intellect *('aql)* in religion. The Asha'irah are on one side of the issue whereas the Shi'ah Ithna-'Ashariyyah and the Mu'tazilah are on the other side.

The Shi'ahs says that irrespective of religious commandments, there is a rational merit and demerit in different courses of action, and that God orders a certain action because it is rationally good and He forbids another action because it is rationally bad. The Asha'irah deny this concept. They say that nothing is good or bad in se. Only what God has ordered us to do is good and what He has forbidden us is bad. [2]

In other words, the Shi'ahs, for example, say that God has forbidden us to tell a lie because lying is bad; whereas the Asha'irah says that lying has become bad because God forbade it. Abu 'l-Hasan al-Ash'ari writes, "Question: Then lying is evil only because God has declared it to be evil? Answer: Certainly. And if He declared it to be good, it would be good; and if He commanded it, no one could gainsay Him." [3]

Another difference in regard to the place of reason in religion is about the relationship between natural cause and effect. The Shi'ah and the Mu'tazilah recognize the relationship between cause and effect. But the Asha'irah deny it. They say that there is no cause except Allah, and it is just a habit *('adah)* of God that whenever, for example, we drink water, He quenches our thirst.' [4]

'Allamah al-Hilli says:

"The gist of the argument of the Asha'irah … is that according to them things come into being by the Will of [God] and His Power which is the sufficient cause of the existence of things. So, as the power (of God) is the sufficient cause, therefore, it is not necessary that a thing should come into being when its physical causes come into being; or that it should cease to exist when its physical cause ceases to exist …. And there is no relationship of any kind between those happenings which happen one after another except that it is the habit (of God) that He creates one thing after another; for example, burning after touching the fire, and quenching of thirst after drinking water; because touching fire and drinking water has nothing to do with burning and quenching of thirst, but all this comes into being by His Power and His Will; and He can create touching without burning and burning without touching, and the same is the case with all actions." [5]

As you will see in the discussions of this book, most differences between the Shi'ahs and the Asha'irah Sunnis stem from their diverse outlooks concerning the place of reason in religion and the relationship between natural cause and effect.

---

2 McCarthy, R.J. "Two Creeds of al-Ash'ari" *(Maqalatu -l Islamiyyin* and *al-Ibanah 'an Usuli 'd-Diyanah)* p. 238-9; 241.

3 *Ibid,*.

4 ash-Shahristani, *al-Milal wa 'n-Nihal*, pp.124-125.

5 al-Hilli, *Kashfu 'l-Haq*

CHAPTER 1
THE ACTIONS OF GOD

A. GOD CAN DO NO WRONG

The Shi'ahs say that God does nothing which is rationally wrong or evil.[6] I do not use this phrase in the sense that “King makes no mistake.” Because “King makes no mistake” actually means that he does nothing at all; he just signs whatever is passed by the parliament. So this tribute is based upon inaction. But “God does no wrong” means that in spite of being active and Omnipotent, God can still not do anything wrong or evil. Why?

Anyone who commits wrong or injustice does so because of one or more of the following reasons:

- either he does not know that it is wrong;
- or he needs something which cannot be obtained without wrongdoing;
- or he had been compelled by somebody else to commit that wrong.

But God is Omniscient and All-Knowing; He is free from want and is not in need of anything; and He is Omnipotent and nobody can compel Him to do anything. So logically it is impossible for God to do any injustice or wrong.

The Asha’irah, on the other hand, say that there is no such thing as rational good or evil. Therefore, they say that “whatever God does is good, because there is nothing bad for Him or compulsory for Him.”[7] 'Abdu 'l-'Aziz Dehlawi, a famous Sunni scholar, writes, “It is the *madhhab* of Ahlu's-Sunnah that nothing is evil for Him; that the things which, if done by human beings or Shaytan, are called evil and for which they are blamed and accursed, are not evil if done by Almighty Allah.”[8]

---

6 Hilli, *Kashfu 'l-Haq; also al-Hilli's al-Babu 'l-Hadi 'Ashar* (English translation by WM. Miller) p. 44

7 Fadl bin Ruzbahan, *Ibtalu Nahji'l-Batil.*

8 Dehlawi, A.A., *Tuhfa-e Ithna-'Ashariyyah.*

B. GOD DOES NOTHING WITHOUT PURPOSE

The Shi'ahs say that God never acts without purpose or aim because rationally it is not commendable to act without purpose. All His actions are based on wisdom and intelligent purpose, though we may not know them. “The Imamiyyah says that Almighty Allah does not do anything aimlessly, but does it because of a purpose and aim.”[9]

The Asha'irah, because of their rejection of rational merit and demerit, say that it is quite right for God to act aimlessly. “It is the *rnadh-hab* of the Asha'irah that the actions of Allah are not caused by any purpose; and they say that it is not permissible to say that His actions are caused by aims ... And He does whatever He wishes, and orders whatever He wills; if He wants to put all His creatures for ever in the Fire (of Hell), He is the Ruler and authority; and sin (of the creatures) have nothing to do with this matter. The effective cause *(*of all things) is He."[10]

9 al-Hilli, *Kashf* and also his *al-Babu 'l-Hadi 'Ashr,* p. 45.

10 Fadl, *op. cit*

C. CAN WE KNOW ALL THE REASONS FOR GOD'S ACTIONS?

As I just said, God does nothing without reason.? There must be a reason for everything which is created by God. However, it is not necessary that we should know the reason of His each and every action. We believe that every work of God is such that if we are made aware of its reasons, we would readily admit that it was the very right thing to do. We often feel perturbed by some incidents or by some problems because we do not know the real purpose behind them.

An illustration can be found in the Qur'an where the meeting of Prophet Musa and another man (who had more knowledge than Musa) is described. The learned man had allowed Musa to accompany him on the condition that "ask me not concerning anything till I myself mention it unto thee." Here is the whole episode:

The stranger: "Lo! You cannot bear patience with me. How can you have patience in that of which you have not got a comprehensive knowledge?"

Musa: "Allah willing, you shall find me patient and I shall not disobey you in any matter."

Then they proceeded in a boat. When they were in the boat, the learned man made a hole in it. Musa objected to it, and was reminded of the condition. Then the learned man slew a lad. Upon this Musa could not contain himself and condemned him in severe words. Again he was reminded of his promise not to ask questions.

Then they came to a township where they were refused food. There they found a wall on the point of falling in ruin, and the learned man repaired it. Musa said, "If you had wished, you might certainly have taken a recompense for it." Upon this third argument, the learned man told Musa: "This is the parting between you and me."

But before parting, he explained the reasons for his actions: "As for the boat, it belonged to the poor people working on the river; and I wished to mar it, for there was a king behind them who is taking every good boat by force.

"As for the lad, his parents were pious persons, and we feared lest he should oppress them by rebellion and disbelief; and we intended that their Lord should change him for them with one better in purity and nearer to mercy.

"And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys in the town and there was a treasure [under the wall] belonging to them; and their father had been righteous. So their Lord intended that they should come to their full strength and should bring forth their treasure, as a mercy from their Lord, and I did not do it upon my command." (18:66-82)

I hope this example will suffice to explain our point of view about the actions of God.

* * * *

There is a saying in the Principles of Islamic jurisprudence (*usulu 'l fiqh)* that, "Whatever is ordained by reason, is also ordained by the *shari'ah;* and whatever is ordained by the *shari'ah, is* ordained by reason." A layman often misunderstands this saying. He thinks that whatever we decide to be good must be confirmed by the *shari'ah* as good accordingly. It is not so. The meaning of the above saying is that if we were to know the reason behind a certain law of the *shari'ah,* our intellect would certainly admit that the law is as it should have been.

And that all laws of the *shari ah* are based upon wisdom.

D. *ASLAH* - THE MOST BENEFICIAL

We, the Shi'ahs, believe that all the actions of God are intended for the ultimate benefit of His creatures. *Aslah* means the most beneficial, and it is used by us to describe the actions of God.

This belief of ours is based on the following reasons: Firstly, He Himself has no need, and therefore whatever He does is for His creatures. Secondly, if His actions became devoid of the creature's benefit, then they will become purposeless; and doing something purposeless, as explained earlier, is rationally not good.[11] Maybe a man who is repairing his roof feels annoyed because of heavy torrents of rain, but rain is for the general benefit; and even the person who at this particular time feels annoyed by it, will derive benefit from it in the long run.

The Asha'irah deny that all God's actions are for the benefit of His creatures because they reject the concept of rational good or evil.[12]

Based on our belief in *aslah,* we believe that every instinct and desire in human beings has been created for some reasons. These instincts or desires should not be crushed but harnessed for the general benefit of mankind.

For instance, sexual desire has been embodied in human nature by God Himself. To crush that instinct will be a protest against the Creator. It should not be, and cannot be, crushed; but, of course, its function should be regulated for the benefit of mankind. And hence the necessity of marriage.

Likewise, fear and desire are natural instincts and should be utilized for human upliftment. A Muslim is taught not to fear anybody or anything except God, and not to desire anything in this world but to be anxious to receive the grace of God.

---

11 al-Hilli, *al-Babu 'l Hadi 'Ashar*, p. 46.

12 an-Nasafi, N.D., *al-'Aqa'id* (with *Sharh* of at-Taftazani) p.130; also see its translation E.E. Elder, A *Commentary on the* Creed *of Islam*, p. 97; ash-Shahristani, *al-Miial wa'n-Nihal,* p.129.

E. GOD'S PROMISE (*WA`D*) & THREAT (*WA'ID*)

God has appointed a Day of Judgement. He has promised many rewards for good deeds and has threatened to punish for evil actions. There is a difference of opinion among Muslims whether or not God is obliged to fulfill His promises and threats.

1. The Mu'tazilah and the Kharijites say that it is compulsory for God to fulfill His promises and threats; that is, God cannot forgive evil actions of man who dies without repentance *(tawbah).*[13]
2. The Asha'irah say that God is obliged to fulfill neither His promises nor His threats; that He may put pious believers (even the prophets) in Hell and put the Shaytan in Paradise. This belief of theirs is based upon their belief that nothing is good or evil by itself; and only what God has commanded us to do is good and what He has forbidden is evil. According to them nothing has any inherent evil or good except what God orders or forbids. [14]
3. The Shi'ahs say that it is necessary for Allah to fulfill His promises of reward because not fulfilling a promise is against virtue and rationally evil; but it is not necessary for Him to fulfill His threats of punishment because forgiving the sinners has virtue in itself. So if He punishes, it will be His justice; and if He forgives, it will be His grace and mercy. [15]

---

13 ash-Shahristani, *al Milal wa 'n Nihal,* pp. 68,145,154.
14 al-Ash'ari, Kitabu *'l-Luma*; p. 99. Also see ash-Shahristani, *al-Milal wa 'n-Nihal,* pp. 128-129.
15 as-Sadiiq, *Risalatu 'I-I'tiqadat,* chp. 22, p. 69.

CHAPTER 2
COMPULSION OR FREEDOM

A. THE DIFFERENCES

Now comes the most vital difference amongst the Muslim sects; and that is the question of compulsion or freedom of man in his actions.

There are four groups:

1. The Mu'tazilah say that man is completely free to do whatever he wished, and that God has no power over his actions at all. This view is known as *tafwiz*- delegation of power by God to man. This group is also known as Qadariyyah.
2. The Mujabbirah (also known as Jabriyyah) say that "man has no power over any of his actions. He is a tool in the hands of Allah like pen in our hand." This view is known as jabr-compulsion.
3. The Asha'irah say that man has no power or will of his own in his actions; but he still "earns" or "acquires" the action. The term they use to describe their belief is *kasb* which literally means to earn, to acquire. What they actually mean is a riddle.
4. The Shi'ah Ithna-'Asharis says that man is neither completely independent of Allah nor compelled by Allah, but the actual position is between these two extremes. The Shiite belief is known as al-amr *bayna 'l-amrayn*. This will be explained later on.

It will be seen that the theories of Mu'tazilah, the Mujabbirah and the Shi'ah are easily understood for what they stand. But the Asha'irah's theory of kasb is as incomprehensible as the Christians' belief of three-in-one god. It is clear that they have used the term *kasb* as a mask to hide their actual belief which is completely identical to the Mujabbirah's belief of compulsion.

'Allamah Shibli Nu'mani, a famous Sunni scholar of India, says, "Those who were bold enough, openly adopted the belief in compulsion and came to be known as Jabriyyah. Those who were hesitent to use the word *jabr,* used the guise of *'kasb'* and *'iradah'.* This guise was invented by Abu 'l Hasan al-Ash'ari."[16] I therefore, will treat both the Jabriyyah and the Asha'irah as one. And as the present day Sunnis are all Asha'irah and as the topic under discussion is of vital importance, I propose to deal with it in some detail.

16 Shibli Nu'mani, *'Ilmu 'l-Kalam*, p. 28.

B. THE SUNNIS' BELIEF

The position of the Sunnis in this respect has been explained by Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali as follows: “No act of any individual, even though it is earned (kasb) by him, is independent of the will of Allah for its existence; and there does not occur in either the physical or the extra-terrestrial world the wink of an eye, the hind of a thought, or the most sudden glance, except by the decree of Allah, of His power, desire and will. This includes evil and good, benefit and harm, success and failure, sin and righteousness, obedience and disobedience, polytheism and true belief."[17]

It will not be out of place to mention that this belief was invented by, and under the influence of, Banu Umayyah to provide a respectable mask to their debauchery and tyranny. As 'Allamah Shibli Nu'mani has admitted in his book 'Ilmu 'l-Kalam:

“Although all the causes were present which were responsible for the differences in faith, yet the political differences started the ball rolling. The reign of Banu Umayyah was full of cruelty and bloodshed; and in reaction to that there was a spirit of revolt among the common people. But the well-wishers of the government always silenced the people by saying that 'whatever happens takes place according to the will of Almighty, and as such people should not raise their voice at all. Everything was destined beforehand; and whatever happens, good or bad, happens according to the will of Allah; and we should bow down to that.”[18]

I think this disclosure-that the idea of *jabr* (and its disguised version known as *'kasb')* was nothing but a weapon of tyrant rulers to subdue the oppressed masses- is more than enough to discredit this belief.

---

17 al-Ghazali, *lhya 'Ulumi 'd-Din (Kitab Qawa'idu'l-'Aqad*), vol,1, p.193; also see *al-Ash'ari, Kitab 'l-Luma',* p. 53,239.

18 Shibli Nu'mani, *'Ilmu 'l-Kalam*, p. 25.

C. THE SHIITE BELIEF

1. ***al-Amr Bayna 'l-Amrayn***

The Shi'ah Ithna-'Asharis, on the other hand, say that we know the difference between falling down from a roof-top and coming down by ladders. The second act is done by our own power, will and intention; while the falling down is not so. And we know that our actions are not like falling down from the roof-top; instead they are like coming down the ladder with out own will and power. Therefore, what we do are our own actions and should not be attributed solely to Allah.

Again, we see that there are some of our actions for which we are either praised or blamed, while for other happenings we are neither praised nor condemned. It clearly shows that the first category is within our power and will, and the second category is beyond our power and will. For example, we may be advised to treat an ailment in this or that way, but we cannot be advised to recover from the illness. It means that getting treatment is within our power, but getting well is not within the sphere of our activities.

Therefore, we say that there are many things and aspects of life which are within our power and will, while some others are not within our power. Those things for which we can be advised, praised or blamed, are within our power and will. And the commandments of religion (the *shari'ah)* come under this category, because we have been advised or ordered to do this and not to do that, and because we are praised when we obey those commands and blamed when we disobey them. Therefore, it is absolutely wrong to say that our sins and righteousness, our obedience and disobedience, our true beliefs and wrong belief are by decree of Allah and His desire and will.

Shaykh as-Saduq says, “Allah possesses foreknowledge of human actions, but does not compel them to act in any particular manner.”[19]

But neither does this mean that man is completely independent of Allah. In fact, the power and wiil to act as we like is given to us by Allah. Thus Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, “There is no compulsion (by Allah), nor is there absolute delegation of power (from Allah to man); but the real position is between these two extremes: *al-amr bayna 'l-amrayn*.”[20]

The following example clearly portrays this "middle position". Suppose a man's hand is totally paralysed to an extent that he cannot move even a finger. A doctor has fitted an electrical device on his hand which, on being switched on, enables the man to use his hand freely in a normal way. The device is activated by a remote control which the doctor keeps in his own custody. When the doctor switches the device on, the man uses his hand in any way he intends, but when the device is off, he cannot do nothing. Now if the device is on and the patient does any work, can that work be attributed independently to him? No, because the power comes from that device which is fully controlled by the doctor. Then can it be attributed to the doctor? No, because the man had done it by his own free will and choice. This is exactly the position of our activities. We are not under compulsion because the will and choice is ours; nor are we completely independent, because the power to do whatever we intend to do comes from God.[21]

And at what point does our ability to do things start? Imam Musa al-Kazim (peace be upon him) said,

“A man acquires that ability when four conditions are fulfilled: 1. when there is nothing to hinder his plans; 2 his health and 3 the faculties (needed for that work) are up to the required standard; and 4 Allah provides him the occasion of that work. When all these conditions are fulfilled, a man becomes capable of acting according to his own free will.”

When asked for an example, the Imam said,

---

19 as-Saduq, *al-I'tiqadat,* chp. 4, p. 58.
20 *Ibid*, chp. 5, p. 58.
21 al-Khui, *al-Bayan* fi *Tafsiri'l-Qur* an, p.102. This example has been slightly modified by us.

“Let us suppose that there is a man, without any hindrance, of good health and proper strength; yet he cannot commit adultery unless he finds a woman. When he gets a woman (and the fourth condition is fulfilled), then it is up to him to choose one of the two alternatives: either he controls his evil emotions and saves himself as (Prophet) Yusuf did, or he commits adultery. If he protects himself from that sin, it will not be by compulsion of Allah (as some people think). And if he commits the sin, it does not mean that he was above the power of Allah (as others think).” [22]

---

22 as-Saduq, *al-I'tiqadat,* chp. 9, p. 60.

2. Predestination & the Day of judgement

According.to our point of view, if any one believes in predestination, then he cannot at the same time believe in the day of judgement (qiyamat). If Allah decrees every act which is done by us, then why should He inflict punishment upon us for those sins, evils and transgressions, for polytheism, disbelief and immoralities which He Himself predestined for us. It will be gross injustice.

Here is a talk of Imam Musa al-Kazim (peace be upon him) in his childhood with Imam Abu Hanifah, the founder of the Hanafi school of Sunni laws:

Abu Hanifah once went to meet Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him). The Imam was inside his house and Abu Hanifah was waiting for him to come out. In the meantime, a small child came out and Abu Hanifah, just to pass sometime, asked him, "O child, from whom is the action of man?" The child at once said,

"O Abu Hanifah, there are only three imaginable sources: either the man himself is the originator of his action; or God is the doer of that action; or both together are the originators of that action. Now if God is the doer of the actions of man, then why does He inflict punishment on man for the sins? Is it *not* injustice (*zulm*)? And Allah says, "Verily Allah is not unjust to His creatures." And if both man and God are partners in that crime, then is it *not* gross injustice that the powerful partner (i.e., God) punishes the weaker partner (i.e., man) for an action which both of them performed together? And as these two alternatives are proved to be illogical and impossible, the third theory is proved to be correct that man does his actions by his own power and will."[23]

Abu Hanifah kissed the forehead of the child. That child was Musa, later known as al-Kazim, the seventh Imam of the Shi'ahs.

---

23 at-Tabrasi, *al-Ihtijaj* vol. 2, pp. 387-388; al-Majisi, *Biharu l-Anwar*, vol. 5, p. 4, 27.

3. Abu Hanifah & Bahlul

Imam Abu Hanifah, of course, believed that man does nothing by his own will and power. In spite of the clever and logical discourse of Imam Musa alKazim, mentioned above, he did not charge his belief. Once his theory led to a tragi-comic event.

Bahlul means wise and chief. It was the name of a famous companion of Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq who lived up to the last days of Imam 'Ali an-Naqi and saw Imam Hasan al-'Askari also. As a twist of fate, he is commonly referred to as Bahlul '*Majnun*' (*Bahlul*, the lunatic). This is so because he pretended to be insane in order to save himself from the responsibilities of judgeship offered him by the Caliph Harun ar-Rashid. But, wise as he was, he took advantage of his supposed lunacy and always censured great people of his time (including the kings) for their short-comings.

Once he heard Imam Abu Hanifah (who lived in Kufa) telling his disciples that, "I have heard three things from Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq which I think are wrong." The disciples asked what those things were. Imam Abu Hanifah said:

"First of all, Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq says that Allah cannot be seen. But it is wrong. If a thing does exist, then it must be seen. Secondly, he says that Satan will be punished in Hell. But it is absurd. Because Satan was created from fire: how can fire do any harm to a thing or person made of fire? Thirdly, he says that a man's action is done by his will and power, and that he is responsible for it. But it is wrong because all the actions of man are done by Allah's will and power, and Allah is, actually, responsible for it."

The disciples' applaud had just begun when Bahlul took a lump of clay and sent it hurtling towards Abu Hanifah. It hit him on the forehead, he cried in anguish and pain. The disciples caught Bahlul, and Abu Hanifah took him to the judge.

The judge heard the complaint and asked Bahlul whether the allegation was true.

Bahlul: "O Judge! Imam Abu Hanifah alleges that he is suffering from a searing pain in his head because of the clay which hit him. But I think he is lying. I cannot believe him until I see the pain."

Abu Hanifah: "You really are mad! How can I show you the pain? Has anybody ever seen a pain?"

Bahlul: "But, O Judge, he was just teaching his disciples that if a thing does exist, then it must be seen. As he cannot show the pain, I submit that according to his own belief, he is not suffering from any pain at all."

Abu Hanifah: "Oh! my head is splitting because of the pain."

Bahlul: "O Judge, there is another matter which I just remembered. He was also telling his disciples that as Satan is made of fire, the fire of Hell cannot do him any harm. Now man is made of clay, as the Qur'an says, and it was a lump of clay which hit him: I wonder how can he claim that a lump of clay did harm to a man made of clay?"

Abu Hanifah: "O Judge! Bahlul wants to go scot-free by his verbosity. Please, take my revenge from him."

Bahlul: "O Judge, I think Imam Abu Hanifah has very wrongfully brought me in this court. He was just teaching his disciples that all the actions of man are done by Allah, and that Allah is responsible for those actions. Now, why did he bring me here? If he really is suffering from the effect of that lump of clay, he should file suit against Allah who did hit him with that clay. Why should a poor harmless person like me be brought to the court. When all I am supposed to do was in fact done by Allah?"

The judge acquitted Bahlul.

D. MAN'S WILL IN REGARD TO BELIEF & DISBELIEF

It has been mentioned earlier that God does nothing without a purpose. So we may ask: what is the purpose of creating man?

God created man so that he may acquire those virtues which may bring him nearer to God. Man comes in this world like a blank paper. During his span of life various designs appear on that paper as the effect of his thoughts and deeds. Virtues which he acquires are like beautiful designs, and vices are like monstrous drawings. God says, ***"Blessed be He, Who created death and life so that He may try you which of you is best in deeds."*** (67:1-2)

God gave wisdom, will and power to man so that he may acquire the virtues. He has shown him the right path and has warned him against going astray. But He has not compelled him to do good deed nor to commit vices. He has given him power to do as he wishes in this life. The Qur'an says, "***I swear by........the soul and Him who made it perfect, then He inspired it (the knowledge of) right and wrong for it. He who purifies it (i.e. the soul) will indeed be successful; and he who corrupts it will indeed fail.***" (91:7-10)

1. Tawfiq & Khidhlan

As the purpose of our creation is to acquire virtues by obeying God and as we have been given freedom of choice, God does not compel us to select a certain path. Still, in His infinite mercy, He helps a man who sincerely wants to obey Him; but that help does not amount to any compulsion from God.

Let us take the example of a mason who is asked to repair a roof. He agrees to do the work, and starts preparation. But then he finds some difficulty in obtaining a ladder of proper height. You known that he is going to do the job any way; but you also know that he will face difficulty because of the shortness of the ladder. So you loan him your own ladder which is of proper height, and thus you make his work easier for him.

But remember that the help was given to him when the mason had the firm intention of doing the job, when he had made all his preparations. So this help did not compel him to start his work, nor did it create the intention or will or power to repair the roof. The power, the intention, the will, all was there beforehand. What you did was just to help him in carrying out his intention.

Such help from God, given to those persons who sincerely want to obey His commands, is called *tawfi'q*. *Tawfiq* means helping someone to succeed.

Now let us look at the other side. Suupose the mason did not want to repair that roof and refused outright to accept the job; or even after agreeing to do the work, he started delaying tactics and putting lame excuses. You knew that he had no intention of doing the job. Therefore, there was no sense in providing him with the ladder and you did not offer it to him. Can it be said that by withholding the ladder from him, you compelled him not to do the job? No. Because that man, with his own free will and choice, had refused the job (or was postponing it without any genuine cause). Your ladder had nothing to do with his decision.

That withholding of the help from those persons who choose to disobey the commands of God by their own free will and power, is called *khidlan*. *khidlan* means abandonment.

You will find many verses in the Qur'an which refer to these two aspects of God's act: helping and withholding the help. Take for example:

"Whomsoever Allah wills to guide, He opens his heart to Islam; and whomsoever He wishes to leave straying, He makes his heart narrow and constricted, as if he was climbing into the heights - thus does Allah heap the punishment on those who do not believe."(6:125)

Mark that God does not mislead the unbelievers --- He just leaves them straying. It means that they had gone astray and then God left them to wander. This meaning becomes more dear when you see the last phrase “thus does Allah heap the punishment on those who do not believe.” It clearly shows that they were left in their wandering as a sort of punishment for their disbelief. They had chosen, on their own accord, not to believe in God; and then, as a result of that disbelief, God left them straying. Another verse says:

By it (i.e., the Qur'an) He leaves many straying, and many He leads into the right path. But leaves not straying except those who transgress divine commandments. (2:26)

Here also only those have been left straying who had already transgressed the laws by their own choice. It is clear that they were left in their wandering because they had gone astray themselves by their own wrong choice.

2. Knowledge of God & Action of Man

Question: God knows everything. He knew from ever that, for example, Bakr would be an unbeliever. Now, if Bakr accepts Islam, it would mean that the knowledge of God was wrong; and since God's knowledge can never be wrong, therefore, it is necessary for Bakr to remain an unbeliever. Does it not mean that Bakr had to remain an unbeliever because of the previous knowledge of God?

Answer: It is one thing to know what is going to happen; and quite another to cause that thing to happen. Suppose there is a doctor who, after examining a patient, declares that the patient cannot survive more than half an hour. Can it be said that the doctor caused the death of that patient because he knew that the patient was going to die? Can a claim be lodged against him that he killed the patient? No. Instead this incident will be quoted to show how experienced that doctor is because he foresaw what was going to happen to the patient after half an hour.

Let us look at this example again. The doctor knew that the patient was going to die, because he was in such a condition that he could not survive more than half an hour. So, that knowledge was derived from the condition of the patient; not that the patient died because of the knowledge of the doctor. The knowledge was the result of the condition of the patient; the condition of the patient was not the result of the knowledge of the doctor.

This simple difference was overlooked by the majority of the Muslims who though that as God knew everything which was to happen, so it must happen accordingly. They failed to realize that Bakr was to die an unbeliever, because he was going to die in the condition of disbelief by his own will; that the knowledge of God was based upon that independent will of Bakr; not that Bakr died an unbeliever because of the knowledge of God.

Of course, there is a difference between the knowledge of a doctor and the knowledge of God; The knowledge of doctor is imperfect and incomplete. Therefore, his forecast can be wrong at certain times. But the knowledge of God is perfect and complete in every respect for ever. Therefore, His knowledge cannot be wrong at anytime. Still it does not mean that His knowledge causes the sin or polytheism or hypocrisy or faith and virtue of His creature.

E. *LUTF - THE* GRACE OF GOD

If a person can do some thing good to someone without harming any other person and still he does not do so, then his reluctance from helping the others is against virtue, it is evil. Therefore, if God can do any thing beneficial for His creatures and then suppose that He does not do so, it will be against the virtue of God, and not commendable. It is for this reason we believe that "it is morally incumbent upon Allah to do every act of *lutf* (grace) in dealing with mankind."[24]

What is the meaning of *lutf* which has been roughly translated above as "grace"? *Lutf is* the action on part of God which would help to bring His creatures nearer to His devotion and obedience, and facilitate moral correction. It must be mentioned here that "Allah has ordered us to be just, but He Himself treats us with something better than justice, namely tafaddul---grace." (*Tafaddul has* same meaning as *lutf*.)

The belief that *lutf* is morally incumbent upon God is the distinctive belief of the Shi'ah Ithna-'Asharis. The Sunnis do not believe that *lutf* is incumbent upon God. They say that even justice ('*adl*) is not incumbent upon God, let alone *lutf*. According to the examples given by them, if God sends good and virtuous persons to Hell and sends Satan to Paradise, it will be quite right. There would be nothing wrong.

Both *tawfiq* and *lutf*, as mentioned above, are primarily meant to help the individuals or the groups in obeying the commandments of God. However, sometimes such help is offered to an obstinate person not because he is expected to take its advantage and perform his duties, but just to close the door of argument, to refute all his excuses, so that he may not claim that had he been given a bit of encouragement, he would have been an obedient servant of God. This type of help is known as *itmamu 'l-hujjat.*

Some examples of *lutf*: Now we know that God created us to acquire virtues in this life so that we may be nearer to God in the hereafter. The question is: How are we to know what is virtue and what is evil? Human intellect does appreciate inherent virtue or evil of many of our actions, but can we expect everybody to act according to the perfect reason? Certainly not. Many are the times when desire or anger suppresses the voice of wisdom; many are the times when an immediate benefit (obtainable by evil means) seems more impressive than the fear of condemnation by society or losing the grace of God in the life after death.

If God had left mankind without any effective device to check their evil thoughts and desires, it would have been tantamount to defeating His own purpose. Therefore, He laid down some rules and sent the Prophets and Imams to bring those rules to His creatures, and to explain and protect those laws from corruption.

And He did not leave us at that, He also appointed a day when all will be gathered to give account of their beliefs and actions. And, He, in His mercy and justice, sent us the news that there was to be a Day of Reckoning, a Day of Judgement, a Day of Rewards and Punishments. This information helps the creatures in obeying those laws which were brought by the prophets.

Thus sending the *shari'ah is* a *lutf* which helps the mankind to achieve the purpose of life. Also, sending the prophets and the Imams, and appointing a Day of judgement are *lutf* for the same reason. And because these acts are *lutf*, they are incumbent upon God.

* * * * *

The rules of the *shari'ah* are called *taklif. Taklif* literally means to put in hardship. As any law, thought it may be the simplest one, appears to human nature as a 'hardship; the *shari'ah is* called *taklif.* (By the way, lawlessness in the end brings real hardship and calamities, while the law brings peace and happiness.)

---

24 al-Hilli, al-Babu *'l-Hadi 'Ashar,* p. 99

Though the rules of the shari'ah are called 'hardship,' in reality they are well below our strength and ability. God says, "***On no soul does Allah place a burden but less than its capacity.***" (2:286)

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) said,

"Allah did not give orders to His servants but that they were less than their strength ...Because He told them to pray five times a day, fast one month in a year, pay *zakat* five *dirhams* in two hundred and to go to *hajj* once in a life; but the people have strength to do more than this minimum."[25]

Significantly, the word used in the above verse is not taqãt - strength and ability, but wus' which carries the idea of "ease" and "comfort" and here means "less than its strength or capacity." This is one aspect of God's infinite mercy as He says, ***"Allah intends every facility for you and He does not want to put you in difficulties."*** (2:185) Some more explanation about the shari'ah will be given in Chapter Three.

---

25 as-Saduq, *Risalatu'l-I'tiqadat*, chp. 3, p. 57

CHAPTER 3
TEST AND SUFFERING

A. TEST & TRIAL IN MAN'S LIFE

Now you know that we have been created to acquire virtues so that we may be nearer to Allah. But how to ascertain the standard of our virtues? To make us understand the judgement of Allah easily, He has established a system of tests which determine our spiritual perfection or lack of it, as the case may be. Allah has said in the Qur'an

"Verily, We created man from a drop of mingled sperm so that We may test him; and therefore We made him hearing and seeing. We have indeed showed him the way, now he be grateful or ungrateful." (76:3)

Test will be held for all persons, believers and non-believers alike. Test presupposes that the man is not predestined to go to Paradise or Hell, as some groups of the Christians and the majority of the Muslims suppose. If our place in the hereafter is predetermined, then why should we be given orders to do this and not to do that? Those who believe that God has already predestined our actions and our ultimate destination, then can neither justify the theory of test which is mentioned in numerous verses of the Qur'an nor can they justify their belief in the Day of Judgement. Why the Day of judgement when everything is pre-arranged? And whose judgement when one does only what has been ordained for him by God?

******

Since we believe that God knows everything, then why should He test us?

The test which we are to undergo is not meant to add to the knowledge of God. Although God knows everything, it still is necessary that all men and women be put to test so that the true form of God's justice and mercy may emerge on the Day of Judgement. If God were to send all persons to Paradise or Hell according to His own knowledge without putting them to test for their beliefs and deeds, then those sent to Hell could rightly complain that why were they being punished without any sin on their part while others enjoyed bliss of Paradise without any good deed in their credit? So in order to uphold the principle of justice and fairness, it was necessary for God to test all persons before sending them to Hell or Paradise.

B. CATEGORIES OF TEST & SUFFERING

The tests and trials may be divided into two categories:

First is the test by the rules of the *shari'ah* and tenets of faith. As already explained, God sent the *shari'ah* with the prophets, and man is expected to believe in the true religion sincerely and obey its rules faithfully.

The second category is the harder one, and that is by sufferings. Allah says in the Quran:

"Verily, We shall put you to test with some fear, and hunger, and with some loss of wealth, lives, and offsprings. And (O Muhammad) convey good tidings to those who are patient, who say, when inflicted by hardship, "Verily we are of God and verily to Him shall we return;" upon them is the blessings of Allah and His mercy." (2:155)

There are innumerable miseries, accidents, floods, earthquakes; fires, robbery, war, riot, famine, epidemics- all such things have effect upon our lives: We are being tested as how we react to them. Does our faith remain unshaken? Have we proved ourselves as pillar of courage to sustain the hopes of others? Have we shown fortitude and patience in face of these disasters? Our ever-lasting happiness depends upon the result of these tests.

*****

Sufferings can be attributed to any one or more of the following three causes:

1. 1. The suffering which is a result of our own negligence or carelessness. A man overlooks the rules of hygiene and falls ill. He himself is the immediate cause of his suffering, and his affliction is the natural consequence of his carelessness. In strict legal sense, there is no sin in it. It is a self-inflicted harm. Nobody else is involved in it. He may, if he wants, blame himself.
2. The second cause of suffering is nature; such sufferings are described by us as 'the act of God.' Earthquake, cyclone, storms and such other natural incidents which are beyond human control come in this category. Such incidents are necessary to run the machinery of the world according to planned and systematic way. Nevertheless, the sufferer and his worth is put to test by these sufferings.
3. The third is the suffering which is caused by other person or persons. This is the most complicated type of suffering. A tyrant ruler, an irritating neighbour, a disobedient child, a heartless enemy, an indisciplined subordinate, a boasting superior, a dishonest customer, a cheating partner, a torturing spouse, an unjust arbitrator-these are some of the examples given at random. A man has to suffer in all these cases, whether willing or unwilling, often without any fault of his own.

C. WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

God could have made us all like angels, without any independent will or power of our own. But in that case man's virtues would not have been worth any praise. It was and is the plan of God to give us power and will to do as we like, because only then can we be responsible for our good or evil deeds. And only then can we feel that we have achieved something worth its name.

Thus God gave us the will and power to act according to our will. And after this bestowing of power, we were sent to this world to be tested. Try to visualize this world in this light: There is a tyrant king, trying to capture the world and eliminate the God-loving people from this earth. He goes against the requirements of God to rule justly and mercifully He is thus failing in his test.

On the other side are his God-loving subjects. What is expected of them? They are expected to live a virtuous life, and to persuade others to follow their example. They feel that God expects them to warn their tyrant ruler because it is the only way to save him from eternal disgrace, and to save his victims from his cruelties. If they choose not to interfere, they too will fail in their test. If they opt to follow the command of God they are performing their duty towards themselves, towards mankind and towards God.

What follows now is either of the two things: either the king accepts their advice, heeds their sermons and follows them onto the path of God; or he ignores their warning and returns to his old tactics. If he follows their advice and returns to the path of God, then it is good for everyone: the virtuous people did their duty by warning him; and he did his own duty by following their advice. All pass the test with flying colours.

But if he ignores their warnings and wants to remove them from his way, then he loses every chance of success in this most important test. But what should be the course of action for those virtuous people? Should they surrender to the king's godlessness, or should they continue in their efforts to make him amend his ways? If they surrender, the success which they have achieved so far would turn into failure. If they do not surrender, they would have no alternative but to endure the hardships inflicted by that tyrant.

To summarize, we can say that (1) every person is, being tested in this world; (2) everybody provides a chance of test for others, as well as for himself. For example, if an ill-tempered person harms his neighbour, he is failing in his test; but at the same time he is providing a test for his neighbour also. If his neighbour tries to correct his behaviour by his own example, and by persuasion, then he succeeds in his own test, no matter whether his ill-tempered neighbour changes his attitude or not.

By the way, it is for this reason that Islam expects us to perform our duties towards others without caring whether they perform their duty or not. After all, as we are undergoing a test, we are like students sitting in an examination hall. No student would like to ruin his answer book just because his classfellow did not write his own test-papers well.

****

But why suffer on account of others?

Now comes the other question: Why should we suffer on account of the folly of others? We are not lifeless models; we are human beings. We have got feelings. Why should our feelings be injured just because somebody else is failing in his duties? Likewise, one may ask: “Why should we be inflicted with injuries or loss of life or property, or with sorrows and gloom, in the course of what is loosely termed as 'act of God' like flood, earthquake, storms and cyclones?”

All these questions would have been of relevance if the death in this world would have been the end of life, if there had been no Day of judgement. But, at present, the position is as follows:

No matter how great our sufferings, they are not everlasting. We have a sure knowledge that sooner or later, all this trouble will come to an end because our stay in this world will be terminated one

day and we will be transferred to another everlasting world. And as soon as we are transferred from this world, our anxiety and trouble will end provided we have prepared ourselves for it.

According to our belief, God rewards man for his sufferings, whether he be a Muslim or a non-Muslim.[26]Those persons who have committed sins get reward of sufferings in the form of remission of the punishment in the life hereafter. And those who did not commit any sin, like Prophets and Imams, and still suffered most of all, will be rewarded by higher and greater prestige and honor : in the presence of Allah.

Thus according to the Shi'i, a point of view, sufferings of this world ultimately serve to cleanse the man from sins, and to bring him nearer to Allah in the hereafter.

---

26 Hilli, *al-Babu 'l Hadi 'Ashar*, p. 52.

D. SUFFERINGS AS WARNING OR PUNISHMENT

It should be mentioned here that sometimes suffering and disaster is used not as a test, but as a warning to sinners or a punishment for transgressors.

Examples of such warnings may be found in the traditions of the Prophet such as the following: "When Allah is displeased with a people [and yet does not want to wipe them out completely], the prices go up and up, life-span becomes shortened, trade brings no profit and the land bears less fruits."

The Prophet also explained that adultery, when practised openly, increases the accidental and sudden death, brings such plagues and diseases which had never been heard of before. When people resort to cheating in weight and measure, warning comes in form of famine, underemployment, and tyrants. When rich people withhold *zakat,* poverty strikes the community. Imam 'Ali bin Abi Talib said, "If all liable persons paid their *zakat,* there would not be a needy person in the community." These are but a few examples of how God gives us warning so that we may amend our ways.[27]

And examples of sufferings as punishment may be found in the stories of Pharaoh (Fir'awn), Nimrod (Namrud), people of Prophets Lot (Lut), Shu'ayb, Noah (Nuh) and Salih. It will not be out of place to mention here that the outright destruction (like that of the people of Lot, Pharoah and Nimrod) has been removed from the Muslim *ummah* as a respect to the Holy Prophet who was "a mercy to the universe." But the suffering to warn the transgressors continues.

However, one should always remember that God, in His mercy and grace, has hidden the true purpose of a particular suffering from our eyes. Therefore, we should never say that, for example, a certain person suffering from a chronic disease is a sinner who is undergoing punishment. Why? Because, he may be a good person undergoing a hard test for his virtues. So we should never judge anybody by his apparent affluence or poverty, by his good or bad luck, by his physical strength or weakness, by his fortune or misfortune. We should, instead, concentrate upon our own spiritual and moral upliftment.

27al-Majlisi, *Biharu 'l-Anwar,* vol. 70 (chaps. 137, 138) pp. 308-377 which altogether contain 112 traditions

CHAPTER 4
THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

A. THE KNOWLEDGE OF *AL-GHAYB*

al-Ghayb means "unseen" or "hidden" things. *Ilmu 'l ghayb* means knowledge of the things which are hidden at present, like the events of the future. Such knowledge is the sole prerogative of Allah. Nobody can know the *ghayb* except Allah.

Of course, many of us can forecast hundreds of things which are to happen in future. We know in advance the time and extent of tide; we know the exact day, time and extent of solar and lunar eclipses. Weathermen forecast the rain, storm, cyclone and many such conditions of season and weather. By looking at the feature of a man, some of us can even say with a degree of certainty what is the character and nature of that person. Doctors and physicians can easily gauge the chances of survival of their patients. You may find many such examples in your daily life. Is it same as *'ilmu 'l ghayb?* Does the weatherman know the *ghayb?*

The answer is 'No'. Because all such forecasts and prophecies are based upon the observation of the laws of nature. By keen observation and deduction, we are in a position to know many things in advance. Such advance knowledge is based upon deduction and observation of physical laws.

The *'ilmu 'l-ghayb* which is mentioned in the Qur'an as the sole prerogative of Allah, is the knowlege of the unseen things and future events which is not based on deduction or observation of physical laws: It is this type of knowledge which has been referred to in the following verse:

"(Allah is) the Knower of the unseen, and nor does He reveal His secrets to any one, except the one whom He chooses from among the messengers; for verily He causes a guard to march before him and after him." (72:26-27)

This verse and many similar verses declare in unambiguous terms that the knowledge of unseen things and future events, not based on observation of physical laws or deduction, is with God only. And He, in His own wisdom, selects some messengers, prophets and Imams to divulge to them such knowledge as and when He thinks fit. In short, nobody can know the unseen things or future events (without some present signs or deductions) except Allah. And Allah, in His grace, informs whoever He selects for such knowledge, be they angels, prophets or Imams.

In the sayings of the Imams of Ahlu'l-bayt, it has been explained that Allah had revealed only one of His Great Names to 'Asif bin Barkhiya (the vizier of Prophet Sulayman); and by that one part of the knowledge he was able to bring the throne of Bilqis, the Queen of Sheba, from her capital to Jerusalem within any eye-wink.[28]

But Allah had given our Holy Prophet (upon him and his progeny be peace) all the knowledge given to all the prophets from Adam onwards (upon them be peace), as well as the knowledge given to all the angels; and then his knowledge was being increased constantly. And he, by divine order, taught all that to 'Ali (upon him be peace); and that knowledge passing through the succeeding Imams has come to Imam al-Mahdi (upon all of them be peace).[29]That is why they have been called 'the Treasurers of Allah's knowledge.' [30]

---

28 al-Majlisi, *Biharu 'l-Anwar*, vol. 26, p.170.
29 al-Majlisi, *Biharu 'l-Anwar,* vol. 26, chap. 1 to chap. 3, pp. 18-976
30 *Ibid*, chap. 5, pp.105-108.

1. ***"Lawh mah fuz"*** **and** ***"Lawh mahw wa ithbat"***

Lawh means "tablet of wood or stone used for writing". Metaphorically, it is used for "knowledge," because knowledge usually comes from written things. Mahfuz means secure; in safe keeping; something that cannot be apprehended by unauthorised persons; firmly protected. Therefore, *"lawh mahfuz"* means the knowledge which cannot be apprehended by others; the knowledge which is firmly protected.

Mahw means erasure; rubbing something out. *Ithbat* means affirmation; writing. Therefore, "*lawh mahw wa ithbat"* means the knowledge which is capable of erasure and substitution; the knowledge which is liable to change from time to time.

Now that you know the literal meanings of "*lawh mahfuz*" and *"lahw mahw wa ithbat,"* let me explain what is meant by these two terms in Islam.

We know that the knowledge of God can never be wrong. In other words, there can never be any change in the knowlege of God. It is for this reason that God has called His own knowledge as *"lahw mahfuz".* This phrase describes the knowledge of Allah because His knowledge can never change. It is always correct and needs no erasure or substitution or modification.

"Ummu 'l-kitab" is another name used for the knowlege of Allah. It means "the basic book," "the mother of the book." Allah's knowledge is called "the basic book;"that is, the basic knowledge; or "the mother of the book," that is, the source of knowledge because only His knowledge can be called "the true knowledge".

"Lawh mahw wa ithbat" is the name given by God to the knowledge of the angels, prophets and Imams. Their knowledge, though the most complete and perfect of all human beings, is still incomplete when compared to the knowledge of God.

These names have been taken from the following verse of the Qur'an:

"For every term there is a book prescribed; Allah erases out whatever He pleases and writes (whatever He pleases); and with Him is the mother of the book."(13:39)

This 'mother of the book' is called *"lawh mahfuz"* in the following verse:

"Nay, it is the glorious Qur'an, in the guarded tablet." (85:22)

As the knowledge of the angels, prophets and Imams is constantly being replenished, perfected and completed, it is called 'the tablet of erasure and writing - l*awh mahw wa ithbat.*.[31]

More will be said about *lawh mahw wa ithbat* in the following section.

31 *Ibid*, vol. 4, p.130.

B. THE THEORY OF *BADA'*

1. Bada' in the Qur'an

It appears from many stories in the Qur'an that sometimes Allah, in His mercy and wisdom, reveals only a part of His future plan to the angels or the prophets concerned. They are informed of His plan to a certain stage, and the knowledge of the later stage is not revealed to them. Before explaining the theory further, let me give you some examples from the Qur'an.

1. The People of Yunus:

First of all comes the episode of the people of Prophet Yunus. Allah refers to that episode in this verse:

“And why, there was not a town which believed and its faith profited it except the people of Yunus. When they believed We removed from them the torment of ignominy in the life of this world and provided them (with comfort to enjoy it) for a fixed while.” (10:98)

The fact is that the tribe of Prophet Yunus had rejected him; and only two persons had believed in him; one of them a pious person but without knowledge, the other one a righteous man with knowledge. When Prophet Yunus prayed to Allah to send punishment and affliction upon his people because of their disbelief, Allah promised him that on a certain day affliction would visit them. Prophet Yunus with his pious companion left his people and went away. But the learned man remained with the people and tried to put the fear of God in their hearts. He told them that there still was time to repent from their *kufr;* to believe in God and His prophet, Yunus, and then to pray to God to avert that affliction.

On the appointed day, the children were separated from the mothers and the calves from the mother-cows; everybody fasted, all of them went out of the village; there they cried, they prayed, they prostrated to God and asked His forgiveness and pray to Him to avert that affliction. The sky was covered with black clouds, day became like night, thunder and lightening were shattering the whole atmosphere. It appeared that soon the punishment from God would wipe out the whole nation of Prophet Yunus. It was fortunate that they had repented before seeing the punishment; and, therefore, God in His mercy forgave them, and as their prayers, crying and weeping continued, gradually the sky became dear, the clouds went away and all were saved.

Then they waited for Prophet' Yunus to return so that they might follow him. Next day Prophet Yunus came back expecting to see the town destroyed. Instead, he saw a shepherd tending to his herd. He thought that God did not keep His promise, and so he did not enter the town.

Here I am not concerned with the whole incident. What I want to show is that Allah knew before hand that the people of Prophet Yunus would repent, accept the true faith and believe in Prophet Yunus and his God; and thereupon they would eventually be saved. But He did not reveal the whole event to Yunus. Prophet Yunus was informed only that the affliction was to visit them. Naturally he thought that the affliction would wipe out the whole community. Since he was not told, he did not know that before coming of the affliction, the community would repent and that all of them would be saved. It is clear that Allah informed Yunus of the events to a certain stage without telling him the conclusion.

Why was it done so? Because if Prophet Yunus had known that affliction would visit them and then go away, his exhortations would not have in them the force of sincerity that softened the hearts of his people. If that learned companion of Prophet Yunus had known that affliction would visit and then would dear away, he could not have exhorted them so sincerely and so his words would have fallen on deaf ears. It was because Allah, in His own mercy and according to His wise plan, wanted them to listen to the voice of wisdom, He did not reveal the whole future to Yunus. It was not that Allah had told him a lie, or had not intended to keep His promise. He had not told Yunus that his

people would be wiped out by that affliction. The promise was kept. But it was not promised that the people would be destroyed. It was not promised by Allah though all of the parties concerned had thought that the people were going to be destroyed.

This episode clearly shows that God, because of His mercy and wisdom, withheld the knowlege of later stages from Prophet Yunus. Yunus came to know of the whole plan after that plan was carried out and put into effect.

2. The Sacrifice of Prophet Ismai'l:

Now let us look at another example. Prophet Ibrahim was shown in a dream that he was sacrificing his son in the name of God. As it was a dream, he must have seen how he was to kill Isma'il. He must have seen himself binding the hands and feet of the child, blindfolding himself and then putting the knife on the child's throat and pressing it down. Naturally, by seeing this dream he though he was required to kill his only son Isma'il in that way. Therefore, he steeled his heart to sacrifice his only child.

The child heard it and prepared himself to be killed in obedience to the command of God. Father and son both were willing to sacrifice everything in the name of Allah. Prophet Ibrahim did as he had dreamed himself doing; he bound the hands and feet of the child and put him in the position of prostration; and blindfolding himself, put the knife and cut the throat. After removing the blindfold from his eyes, he saw Isma'il smiling and a lamb slaughtered in his place.

Prophet ibrahim thoaght that he had failed in his test. But he had done what he had seen himself doing in dream. Of course, Allah had not informed him of the events up to the last stage. Because if Ibrahim had known that Isma'il would be saved, or if Isma'il had known that he would be saved, there would have been no meaning in that test; there would not have been any chance of showing their willingness to sacrifice everything in the name of Allah. So God showed to Ibrahim in his dream the events to a certain stage but kept him unaware of the final stage; not informing him how the whole episode was to end. Because they did not know the result. Ibrahim and Isma'il were able to show, how willing they were to obey the command of God even to the extent of sacrificing their lives and the lives of their dear ones in His name.

If they had known the result from the beginning, the test would have been meaningless.

3. Tawrat Given to Prophet Musa:

A third example concerns Prophet Musa and the revelation of Tawrat. Prophet Musa was ordered to go to Mount Sinai, fast there for thirty days in preparation for receiving the tablets of Tawrat. On the thirtieth day he cleansed his teeth and went to Mount Sinai. There he was asked by God as why did he cleanse his teeth. He explained that as he was coming to a holy place, he thought it proper to make himself neat and dean. God told him that the smell of the mouth of a fasting person was sweeter before God that the smell of musk and ambergris. And then he was told to return to his staying place, and fast for ten more days and then come to Mount Sinai without cleansing his teeth. Thus it was on the fortieth day that he was given the stone tablets of Tawrat.

Allah knew from ever that Musa would come after cleansing his teeth, and would be asked to fast for ten more days. But neither Musa nor the Israelites had been told about it; nor Musa was told before hand that he was riot to cleanse his teeth on the thirtieth day.

When Allah refers to His knowledge, He describes the whole period of forty nights together:

"When we made appointment with Musa for forty nights. then you (the Israelites) took the (image of) calf (for your god) after he left you and thus you transgressed." (2:51)

And where He refers to the knowledge of Musa, He mentions the thirty days and the ten days separately:

"And We made an appointment with Musa for thirty nights; and We completed it with ten (more); thus was completed the term of his Lord forty nights."(7:142)

The reason of not giving the advance information is clear from the behavior of the Israelites who because of his ten days delay, left worshipping the only and true Allah and started worshipping the image of a calf. The story is given beautifully in the following verses of the Qur'an,

"Said God to Musa, "Verily We have tested thy people in thy absence, and the Samiri had led them astray." So returned Musa unto his people angered, and sorrowful. Said he, "O my people, did not your Lord promise you a good promise? Did then the promise seem long to you, or did you want the wrath from your Lord should light upon you, that you violated the promise with me?" Said they, "We violated not thy promise of our own accord..." Then he (Samiri) brought forth for them a calf. a mere body, with a lowing sound. Then they said, "This is your god and the god of Musa, but he (Musa) has forgotten." (20:85-88)

Just imagine a whole community of several thousand companions of an *ulu 'l-' azm* prophet, in the presence of his successor and vicegerent Harun, leaving the path of true religion and starting idolworship, just because Musa was delayed for a few days! This test of faith could not have been conducted if Allah would had told Musa that he was supposed to stay for forty days; or if he had been told before hand not to cleanse his teeth on the thirtieth day.

2. The Meaning of *Bada'*

These three examples taken from the Qur'an are enough to show that Allah makes known His plan to the angels, prophets or Imams only to that extent which is beneficial to the mankind or which is necessary to make a test meaningful. When the time comes for the angel, the prophet or the Imam concerned to think that the plan of work is nearing its end, a new development extends the plan or brings it to an unexpected end. This new development is called *bada'* in Arabic which means "to appear".

There is no need to emphasize that this appearance or clarification does not concern Allah who knew every thing from ever. It refers to the knowledge of His creatures who come to know at the end of God's plan what they did not know before.

And it is also for this reason that the knowledge of angels, prophets and Imams is called *lawh mahw wa ithbat* (the tablet of erasure and substitution), while the knowledge of Allah is called *lawh mahfuz* (the protected tablet) which is above any change or substitution.

3. The Benefits-of Bada'

There are many reasons for this partial revelation. Some of them may be enumerated here. (In the above mentioned three stories of the Qur'an, you may find two benefits of *bada'.)*

i. *Bada'* helps the servants of Allah to discard their wrong beliefs and come unto the right path, as happened in the case of the people of Prophet Yunus (upon whom be peace).
ii. *Bada'* helps in the test of individuals or the communities, as was the case with Prophet Ibrahim and Isma'il (peace be upon them), and with the Israelites.
iii. As the angels can never be sure that the plan of the events as told to them is final, they constantly seek the guidance from Allah. Thus they never think of themselves as being independent of the guidence and commandments of Allah.

iv. Likewise, the prophets and the Imams can never think that they had known all there was to know. Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his progeny) was advised to always pray: "O My *Lord increase my knowledge."*[32] Imam Zaynu'l-'Abidin (peace be upon him) said, "Had there not been for a verse in the Qur'an, I could have told all the events upto the qiyamah." On being asked, "Which verse?, he recited, "Allah erases whatever He pleases and writes (whatever He pleases)."[33] This verse has been explained in section "A" of this chapter.

It must be mentioned here that many times Allah informs the angels, the prophets or the Imams about future events, clearly telling them that it was the final word. In such cases there can be no amendment of the plan and no erasure or substitution.

v. The human beings can never know what is in store for them in the future. Thus they will always seek the help and mercy of Allah. It will benefit them in this life as well as in the life hereafter.

---

32 The Qur'an, 20:114.

33al-Majlisi, *Biharu 'l-Anwar*, vol. 4, p.118.

CHAPTER 5
FATE AND DIVINE DECREE

A. PREROGATIVES OF ALLAH

it was mentioned in Chapter Two (section "C") that there are some aspects of our life which are beyond our will and power. An example was given of getting treatment and recovering from illness; and it was shown that getting treatment is within our power, but being cured is not within the sphere of our activities.

From birth to death, there are hundreds of such conditions which are beyond our power, which are under the absolute control of Allah. A man is born in a wealthy and educated family; another in a nomad family of primitive civilization. Naturally, the first one has more chances of material wellbeing and intellectual development than the second one. A man is healthy and strong; another remains chronically sick. One is born blind, another has normal eyesight. Naturally, one can do more work than the other. A man lives up to eighty years, another dies in young age. The first one gets enough time to fulfill his plans, while the second one is not given time even to formulate any plan.

These and many such aspects of life are beyond the control of human beings. These matters are truly subject to "predetermination by God" which is called *qada*' (fate) and *qadar* (divine decree).

Why Allah chooses a certain condition of life for a certain man? It is a riddle which is beyond any solution. Many groups have tried to find answer to this puzzle. But all in vain. No theory solves the problems involved even partially.

When all is said and done, the only answer is provided by the verse of the Qur'an: ***"He is not questioned about what He does; but they (the people) shall be questioned."*** (21:23) It was perhaps for this reason that Amiru'l-mu'minin 'Ali bin Abi Talib (peace be upon him) said about qadar of Allah that "it is a deep ocean; you should not enter it."[34]

However, we can be confident that whatever is decreed is because of some good reason. What is the basis of this assertion? Let us look at those things which we do understand, like the system of universe, co-ordination of different forces of nature, our own biological system and the arrangement which have been made on this earth to make our lives pleasant. All these things convince us that the Creator has done nothing without a good reason. After this manifestation of His wisdom and knowledge, if we come across some aspects of life which we are unable to understand, it is not difficult to assume that these things also must have some valid reasons.

Before going further, it will be a good idea to refresh your memory by going through Chapter One (sections "B" to "D") again. Then you will know that Allah does nothing without purpose; that we are not in a position to know every reason of every thing in this world; that Allah does whatever is most beneficial to the mankind; that if we were told the reasons for these aspects of our lives, we would admit that they are most appropriate.

---

34 as-Sadiq; *op. cit.*, chp. 7, p. 59; al-Majlisi, *Biharu'l-Anwar, vol.* 5, p.110.

B. THE PREDETERMINED MEASURE

Allah says in the Qur'an: ***"Verily We have created every thing to a determined measure."*** (54:49) So, it is according to His own measure and plan that Allah has created every thing. As I have mentioned previously, we are justified in believing that there is good reason for every aspect of an individual's life as planned by Allah, though that individual may be unable to understand it by himself.

Look at a wrist watch. Some parts are made of gold, others of steel; still others of glass and ruby. There is a flat dial; arrow-like hands; hair-like spring; and axis-like spring-wheel; and various wheels, all of different sizes., The dial is white, the numerals black, the hand of second red and other two hands black: The numbers vary from one to twelve: In short, it takes scores of parts of different type, colour, origin and shape to make an ordinary wrist watch work.

Could the wrist-watch work if all the components were of the same shape, size and design? Can the minute-and-hour hands complain justifiably why they were coloured black while the hand of second was painted red? Can the number 1 complain why it was not given the position of 12? And if all the numerals were put in one and the same position, could anybody know the time from that watch?

If a small ordinary wrist-watch cannot work without different types of parts, is there any reason to believe that the human society could go on without different types of people having various colour, outlook, capacity and ability?

And look at what the critics say. They demand that there should not have been any sickness, any handicap, any financial gaps; people should have been of equal strength, intelligence and wealth.

Now let us look at what it envisages. It means that nobody would have depended upon any other person. Nobody would have done any work, because we have already supposed that one person would have as much money as the other. Then why should anybody work when his health, life-span, wealth and social status is guaranteed? The world would have remained as it was when Adam came on this earth. No improvement, not even barkcloth! It would have been like spoon-feeding little children who have to do nothing for their own needs. But this is not the purpose for which we were created. We were created for a higher purpose, not just to eat, drink and breed.

If there was to be any test, there was bound to be some hardship. And that hardship differs from person to person. That test varies from one person to another. And it is because of this variety of test that we find variety of problems.

C. SO WHERE IS EQUALITY & JUSTICE?

Question: If what you say is true, then it means that there is no equality between one person and the other. Where is the equality of which Islam is so proud?

Answer: By "equality" we do not mean that all human beings are of equal health and strength; nor that all of them are of equal intelligence; nor that all of them are born with equal eyesight, or hearing capacity; nor do we mean that man and woman are equal in physical capacity and biological functions. What we do mean by "equality" is the equality before the law. Rich and poor, strong and weak, all are equal in the eyes of religion; all have to follow the same rules and all are governed by the same civil, criminal and ethical codes. There is neither high nor low, neither favourite nor neglected in the eyes of law. Another meaning is that anybody in Islam can achieve the highest possible honour and office without any distinction of origin, colour or tribe. The criterion of respect in Islam is neither wealth nor strength, neither birth nor colour. The only criterion is the "character." Allah says, ***"Verily the most honoured before God amongst you is the most pious of you."*** *(49:13)*

Question: But where is the justice of God when He gives one person normal eyes and deprives another of both eyes?

Answer: You have been told that we are here for test. "The examiner is Allah. It is His prerogative to decide in which way a person is to be examined: The justice is in the fact that the examiner does not burden any one with a test which might be beyond his or her ability. Allah has not given us wings to fly; and therefore, does not ask of us to fly in the air like birds. This is justice. Had He asked us to fly like birds (without giving us the wings), then it would have been injustice. But can we claim that because He did not give us wings (while birds have got it) we have been wronged by God? No. It is His sole prerogative to decide by which test should a particular person be examined. And it is His justice and mercy that He does not demand from anyone more than his or her ability. If He has created a man without hands, He at the same time has exempted him from jihad, wudu and tayammum. Had such a person been required to wage war without hands, then we could have rightly complained. But as long as the responsibilities of an individual are tailored to his abilities, nobody can say that Allah has done injustice.

We may sum up this topic in the following lines:

i. This world could not work if all people would have been of the same strength, same ability and same life-span.

ii. The working of the world requires people of different calibre, strength and ability.

iii. All are equal in the eyes of the religion and `laws of religion.

iv. Everybody's responsibilities are tailored to his abilities. And that is the only thing demanded by justice.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq (peace be upon him) was asked about *qada* (fate) and *qadar* (divine decree). He said,

"**When Allah will gather His servants on the Day of Judgement, He will question them about the things which He entrusted them with, i.e., our obedience to the shari'ah which is within our power; but He will not question them about the things which He decreed and predetermined for them, i.e., the conditions of life which are beyond our control**."[35]

35 as-Saduq, *op. cit.*, chap. 7, p. 59.

D. *TADBIR & TAQDIR* (Our Plans & God's Decree)

It was mentioned in Chapter Two that though the power and opportunity to do a certain work is given by Allah, the ultimate responsibility is ours because we opt to do or not to do that work by our own free will and choice. Thus, while the tools of our actions are provided by Allah, the final choice is ours.

It is interesting to note that to a certain extent in matter of predetermined measures, the opposite is true, that is, while the preliminaries are provided by human beings, the final decision is in the hands of Allah. (Mark the phrase 'to certain extent'. I have used this phrase because the decree of Allah is not 'always' dependent upon our actions:) In this context, our action and planning is known as *tadbir,* while Allah's dcision is known as *taqdir.*

To give you one example, if we want to reap a harvest, we will have to cultivate the land, sow the seed, irrigate the plants, weed out the grass and remain always on alert.

Still, after doing all that was necessary, we cannot be sure of getting the harvest. A cyclone, a fire or a lightening may destroy the produce; armed gangs of robbers may attack; circumstances may force us to sell the farm just before the harvest, and so on. Thus while the preliminary stages are prepared by us, the final outcome of that venture is in hands of Allah.

Two of the matters which are of day to day interest to the readers and which are under the direct control of Allah, are life and death, and the means of livelihood. In the following pages, some light will be thrown on these two subjects.

1. Life & Death:

Allah says, ***"He is the one who has created you of clay, then decreed the term; and the predetermined term is with Him; and yet you doubt."***(6:2)In another verse, it is said, ***"And ageth not any aged, nor is reduced from any one's life, but it is all in a Book; verily it is easy for Allah."***(35:11)

These two verses, and especially the last one, show that the life-span of a person is liable to be increased or decreased by the decree of God. And the first verse speaks of a "term" and a "predetermined term" which is with Allah. What do all such references mean?

The idea may be understood easily in the light of the previously mentioned two lawhs (see Chapter Four). For example, Allah decrees that Zayd would live up to hundred years; but if he behaves badly with his relatives, his life-span would be reduced, lets us say, by thirty years and he would die at the age of seventy. This is the direction given to the angel of death. The angel of death does not know how will Zayd behave with his relatives. Therefore, he cannot know whether Zayd would live up to hundred years or would die at the age of seventy.

Now suppose Zayd behaves badly with his relatives. At the end of seventy years, the angel of death must seek guidance from Allah about him. Allah tells him to erase the hundred years, and replace it with seventy years. And Zayd dies.[36]

Thus the knowledge or information of the angel of death is constantly being updated. This is how the decrease or increase in the life-span of a man is effected. And it is the knowledge of the angel of death which has simply been called as a "term" in the first verse. But what about Allah's knowledge? Allah knew from ever that Zayd would die at the age of seventy. There was no change in His knowledge. The actual life-span of an individual is known to Allah only; and that life-span has been termed as a "predetermined term" in the first verse

Question: Why Allah did not decree a fixed age for all human beings?

Answer: So far as human being is concerned, Allah has designed everything with only one purpose:

36 al-Majlisi, *Biharu 'l-Anwar*, vol. 4, p.121.

to help him to acquire virtues and become an obedient servant of Allah. It is precisely for this reason that he has been informed that his life-span can be effected by his deeds. When a man knows that, for example, by being generous to his relatives, he will live longer in this world (and that this immediate reward is quite separate from the rewards of akhirah, the hereafter) he will naturally try to be good to his relatives. And thus he would become a virtuous servant of Allah.

2. Sustenance & Livelihood:

Though trying to earn a livelihood is within the sphere of our activities, the final result is not within our power. We see many people endeavouring hard from sunrise to sunset to earn livelihood and still they spend their lives in constant poverty and need.

Why is it so? Allah says, ***"Allah expands the sustenance for whomsoever He desires and straitens it for whomsoever He desires. "*** (13:26)

Similar to what we mentioned about human life-span, sustenance also may be of two kinds: For example, Allah may inform the angels that if Zayd endeavours hard he will be given ten thousand dollars. But if he does not endeavour so hard he will be given five thousand. Allah knows whether or not Zayd will endeavour; He knows whether finally he will be given ten thousand or five thousand. But Zayd himself does not know and the angels who are able for his sustenance do not know the final outcome. The purpose of keeping every one in suspense is that because of this suspense, man will always try to work up to his utmost capacity to earn more and more; also he will try as many hopeful lines as he can, because he does not know whether he has readied the final stage of his sustenance or not. He does not know where his better livelihood lies. Therefore, he will always be on alert to try as many opportunities as will come his way. He will remain active and ambitious, and constantly in search for a better life.

According to the verse of the Qur'an and writings of the 'ulama', I have come to the conclusion that Allah has fixed a maximum limit for the livelihood of every person. Try as he may, he cannot go beyond that maximum limit. As the maximum limit is hidden front our eyes and, as a matter of act, even from the eyes of the angels, we cannot or at least should not sit idle without endeavouring to better our condition.

Also, it has been left to our choice whether we want to reach that goal by lawful way or through unlawful means. If we adhere to the commandments of Allah and to the tenets of religion, we will reach the desired limit and, at the same time, will earn the grace of Allah in the hereafter. If we choose the unlawful way, we may get that sustenance; but our allotted share of lawful sustenance will be reduced by that much, and by opting the wrong method, we will make ourselves liable to the punishment from Allah in the hereafter.[37]

It must be remembered that in Islam even a lawful thing becomes unlawful if it is obtained by unlawful means. In Islam, the end does not justify the means. There is no denying that lawful methods sometimes seems to be slow, and therefore those people who want to get rich overnight resort to unlawful means. But such tactics do not benefit very much. The following episode will make my point more clear:

Imam 'Ali (peace be upon him) went to a mosque where he wanted to pray. He asked a man standing nearby to look after his horse. When he came out, he had two dirhams in his hand which he intended to give to that man as reward. But that man was nowhere to be seen. Imam 'Ali came to the horse and found that his rein was missing. He gave someone the two dirhams to buy another rein. The man went to the market. He saw a man selling a rein and bought it for two dirhams. When Imam "Ali saw the rein, he recognised that it was his own rein which the supposed guard had stolen. Imam 'Ali had intended to give that guard the same two dirhams as a reward which would have been perfectly lawful for him. But his impatience turned him into a thief and he got nothing

37 al-Majlisi, *Biharu 'l-Anwar*, vol 5, p.147.

except the same two dirhams. His anxiety did not increase his wages at all and made him a criminal into the bargain.

E. OUR PRAYERS & GOD'S DECREE

Now you know that the knowledge given to the angels is often conditional. For example, they are told by Allah that "If Zayd does this work, he will prosper; and if he opts for that work, he will lose financially. If he goes to this doctor, he will recover from his illness very soon; but if he goes to that doctor, his sickness will increase." One of the most important conditions of prosperity, success and happiness is *du* 'a, praying to God. If Zayd prays to Allah and seeks His help, his affliction will be alleviated. If he does not seek the help of Allah, he will be left suffering. Thus Allah says, ***"Say (O Prophet), had it not been for your prayers unto Him, my Lord would care not for you."*** (25:77)

Some people have misgivings about du'a'. They think that since Allah knows what is good for us, there is no need to ask for His help or assistance; there is no need for *du'a* . They say that Allah knows what is best for Zayd and He has already decided how much he is to earn or for example, whether he will be cured of his illness or not. Therefore, what is the need for *du'a* ? What purpose will our *du'a'* serve?

Such people do not appreciate that may be Allah has made Zayd's earning or health dependent upon his *du'a*. May be He has ordered the angels to increase his earnings if he prays to Allah for an increase! May be the condition necessary for recovery from his illness is a certain course of treatment coupled with sincere *du'a'* and prayer to Allah. It has been mentioned in many *ahadith* that one of the things which affect the life of man is *du'a'.* The other important thing is his effort and endeavour. We should never minimize the effect and importance of *dua*, or the effect and importance of hard work.

Of course, if one has already reached his maximum age or maximum livelihood, or if, for example, his sickness is "firmly decreed" to continue, no amount of *du'a* or effort or treatment can do him any good. But, the point to remember is that nobody knows what is "firmly decreed" concerning his age, livelihood or health. Therefore, we have to do relentlessly whatever is possible to improve our conditions.

F. TAWAKKUL & GOD'S DECREE

Besides *du'*a, *tawakkul* is also a very commendable and highly praised virtue. *Tawakkul* means "putting one's trust in somebody". Allah says, ***"And put your trust in Allah, and sufficient is Allah as the dispenser of the affairs."***(4.81)

However, putting your-trust in God should not become an excuse for idleness. The Prophet said,

"*Tawakkul* means that you should bind the camel with a rope and then say that you have trust in Allah that He will protect your camel. You should not have confidence in the rope only, because many a camel is stolen. with the rope. But neither should you neglect the rope because binding with the rope is part of *tawakkul."*

This is the spirit of *tawakkul.* We are to try our best and then we should have trust in God that He will make our efforts succeed. It is a seer nonsense to sit idle and say that Allah will do all our work for us. He says in the Qur" an, ***"And man can have nothing but what he strives for."***(53:39)

The highest standard of tawakkul was set when Amiru'l-mu'minin 'Ali asked some idle persons as to who they were. "We are those who put their trust in Allah;" came the reply. Imam'Ali asked, "How is your confidence in Allah" They said, "We eat when we get food, and we have patience when we do not get it." Imam 'Ali retorted, "Yes, that is the very nature of dog." Stunned, they asked him to explain the true meaning of *tawakkul.* Imam'Ali said, "When we get, we give to others; when we do not get, we thank Allah." It means that we are to try our best to improve our condition. But we should not trust our own power and wisdom only You must have confidence in Allah that He will make your efforts fruitful. Then if you succeed, try to help your brethren with the fruits of your labour. And if you fail, then also be thankful to Allah.

You may ask why should you thank Allah even when you do not succeed. Yes, you should thank Allah because success or failure is not your responsibility. You were expected to do your best and you did. Be thankful to Allah that you were able to perform what was expected of you. It is your efforts that matters. Success or failure is not your province. That is the province of Allah. Have trust and confidence in Him that He will not let your efforts fail. But if He, in His wisdom, does not grant you success, thank Him that still you were able to do your duty.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ash'ari, Abu'l-Hasan al. See under McCarthy

Dehlavi, Shah 'Abdu 'l-'Aziz. *Tuhfa-a Ithna 'Ashariyyah.*

Elder, E.E. A Commentary on *the Creed of Islam* (translation of Taftazamrs Sharh). New York, 1950.

Fadl bin Ruzbahan. *Ibtatu Nahji 'l-Ba`til*. Quoted in its entirety by ash-Shahid al-Qadi Nurullah ash Shushtari in his *Ihqaqu 'l Haqq. Ed. Late* Ayatullah Sayyid Shahabuddin al Mar'ashi an Najafi. Tehran: Matba'ah Islamiyyah.

Ghazali, Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al- (450-505 / 1048-1111). *'Ihyau 'Ululi 'd-Din.* Beirut: Daru'l-Fikr,1975

Hilli, al-'Allamah Abu Mansur al-Hasan ibn Yusuf ibn al-Mutahhar al (648-726 / 1256-*1325). Kash fu 'l Haqq*. Quoted in its entirety by ash Shushtari in his *Ihqaqu 'l Haqq.* (See Fadl.)

al-Ba'bu 'l Hadi 'Ashar: Printed- with its *Sharh* (commentary) by al-Fadil al-Miqdad. For its English translation, see under Miller.

Khu i, as-Sayyid Abu 'l-Qasim al Musawi al-. al-Bayan *fi Tafsiri* '*l-Qur'an*. Kuwait (4th edition) 1399/1979.

Majlisi, Muhammad Baqir al (1037-1110 / 1628-1699). *Biharu 'l Anwar* (New edition in 110 volumes.) Beirut: 3rd edition.

McCarthy, R.J. "Two Creeds of al-Ash'ari" (translations of al-Ash'ari's *Maqalatu 'IIslamiyyin* and *al-Ibana 'an Usuil 'd-Diyanah).* Printed as appendix in McCarthy. *The Theology of Al-Ash'ari* (translation of al-Ash'ari's *Kitabu 'l-Lum'ah).* Beirut 1953.

Miller, WM. *Al-Babu 'l Hadi 'Ashar* (English translation). London: Luzac and Co.,1958.

Nasafi, Najmu 'd-Din an-. *al-'Aqa'id* (with its *Sharh* [commentary] by Sa'du 'd-Din atTaftazani). Istanbul 1326 A.H. For the English translation of Taftazanis *Sharh,* see under Elder.

Nu'mani, Shibli. 'Ilmu *'l-Kalam.* Karachi: 1979.

Rizvi, S. Saeed Akhtar. *God of Islam.* Dar-esSalaam: Bilal Muslim Mission, 1969; Tehran:

Wofis,1978.

Saduq, Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Babawayh al-Qummi as- (c. 306-381 /919-998). *Risalatu 'l Itiqadat.* Published in a collection entitled as *Nususu 'd-Dirasah.* Beirut: al-A'lami Press, 1408/1988. Its English translation entitled as *A Shiite Creed* by Asaf A.A. Fyzee was reprinted in 1982 by Wofis, Tehran.

Shahristani, Muhammad ibn 'Abdu 'l-Karim ash- (d. 548 AH). *al-Milal wa'n-Nihal.* Iran, 3rd edition, 1361 (solar) AH.

Tabrasi, Abu Mansur Ahmad ibn 'Ali at- (d. 620/1223). *al-Ihtijaj.* Ed. Muhammad Baqir al--Kharsan. Beirut: 1403 / 1983.